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ABSTRACT

A study examined bilingual children's composing behaviors during classroom writing and their perceptions of writing. Students' descriptions of what occurred in their day-to-day environment were analyzed using ethnographic methods. The researcher observed five subjects--bilingual students in kindergarten through third grade--for 145 hours, and conducted both formal and informal interviews. Collected data were analyzed using the developmental research sequence described by J. Spradley, and 12 composing behaviors were identified: (1) reading back, (2) invented spellings, (3) copying, (4) body language, (5) prewriting, (6) concealing writing, (7) writing play, (8) confirmation questions, (9) talking while writing, (10) asking questions, (11) statements about writing, and (12) taking breaks. Many of these composing behaviors are also used by monolingual students. However, bilinguals talked while they wrote in order to make the transition to writing by using Spanish phrases to get started writing. Three other behaviors were specific to the bilingual children: reading back, confirming questions, and concealing writing. In this study, teachers served as models for both oral and written language in the classroom, encouraging verbal and written expression from children based on the children's agendas and important life events, and focusing on getting meaning from the children, learning from them, and accepting their individual composing levels and styles. (SRT)

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An Ethnographic Account of the Composing Behaviors of Five Young Bilingual Children

by

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Literacy for young bilingual children is an issue of great importance in recent research in bilingual education. Not only because of the numbers of children entering our schools whose first language is not English, but also because a major controversy now exists about appropriate strategies for teaching these special children. The great diversity of opinion about the best instructional methodologies for bilingual children is, at least in part, a result of the paucity of research directed at describing and understanding these children and their learning. A preliminary step toward instructional planning must be the careful description of young bilingual children, their writings, and perceptions of literacy. This study has been planned in order to document bilingual children's composing behaviors during writing in a classroom situation and their perceptions of writing.

Over the past fifteen years interest in the teaching of writing has soared. A paradigm shift has occurred which changes the emphasis in writing from the products to the processes involved in writing (Calkins, 1986). The composing processes of large numbers of monolingual children have been studied and teachers have come away with a very important realization: when teachers begin observing how students go about writing, they can provide appropriate assistance. Their practices are congruent with the needs of the child.

In studies of young writers, researchers have described their writing products (Clay, 1977) and, in a few studies, have given information about young children while they write

(Childers, 1981; Dyson, 1982; Taylor, 1983). For example, we know that some young children take frequent breaks while writing, write for an audience, and converse copiously while writing (Childers, 1981). Are these composing behaviors the same for bilingual children? Research on composing behaviors with young bilingual children is in its infancy. A descriptive approach to the problem is essential to gather information about these procedures. This study of five young writers is a study with a unique population--young bilingual writers.

Young bilingual children enter school with well developed notions of literacy (Ferreiro, 1978; Goodman, 1980, 1982). Many factors in classroom life and their lives in general affect their views or perceptions about literacy. As they interact with their environment these views may change, be elaborated to or clarified. This process of making sense of the language they are surrounded by is influenced by the social context of and the interactions between children and teachers. In order to design effective instruction for young bilingual children, consideration of these views of literacy and the components of writing is essential. This study investigated the composing behaviors of five young bilingual children and their views of writing. The study focused on two guiding questions:

1. What are the behaviors that accompany the composing processing of young bilingual children? What do children do while they write (i.e., talking, drawing,

reading)?

2. How do Spanish-speaking young children view the writing process?

Design of the Study

The researcher employed ethnographic methods to study this problem. Ethnography provides a means through which the researcher can attempt to gain the perspective of the subject (i.e., see the problem through the child's eyes) in order to understand the problem being studied (Spradley, 1980).

Using an ethnographic approach, the researcher learned from subjects via description of what occurred in the day-to-day environment of the subjects. In this study, the individual learner was described in terms of his/her unique characteristics and his/her interaction with others in this classroom, including the teachers. Dynamic changes were occurring in these children as they made the transition from Spanish to English. It was important, then, to consider the individuals in detail as they began to write. Their perceptions as well as teachers' perceptions were seen as crucial in facilitating the writing process. The social interactions and research perspective provided the scaffolding for this project. This perspective considers the perceptions of the learners and the teachers in constant interaction and change. The classroom then was viewed as a social context in which the natural give and take of participants affected the learning outcomes. The researcher collected field notes,

conducted interviews, took photographs, and collected samples of writings for later analysis in order to describe in detail the classroom studied.

The site and subjects. The school chosen for this study was one of two schools where all bilingual children in this mid-sized city were bussed daily. The English as a Second Language class (ESL) was chosen for the study because the bilingual classrooms were by teachers report were structured to the specific curriculum of the regular classrooms (i.e., spelling, mathematics, and reading). The ESL classroom was selected because the curricular focus was on language arts related activities. An emphasis on communication was observed in pilot work in both oral and written language. In an initial 2-week observation period 30 Spanish-speaking children were observed from grade levels kindergarten through fifth grade.

Of this group, five children were selected who met the criteria established: (1) the child was making the transition from speaking Spanish to speaking English and (2) the child spent at least 2 hours a day in a bilingual setting but not more than 4 hours a day in these special classes. This study focused on emergent writers and their views of writing. The kindergarteners observed were not yet writing and were, therefore, not selected. The older children in grades four and five who were well established writers, therefore, failed to meet the criteria for selection. All of the five Hispanic children who are the subjects of this study had recently

arrived from Central and South American countries and all had at least one parent who attended a university as a full-time student. The five children, whom the researcher called for purposes of this study, Jesús, José, Marco, Teresa, and Yolanda, knew no English upon arrival according to observations, interviews with the children, and teacher report. The average length of stay in the United States as reported by the teachers was one year while the parent(s) completed coursework at the university. One of the original subjects, however, moved back to Venezuela during spring holidays and the researcher was gratified that she had designed the study to include data on all Spanish speakers at the initial observation stages.

Observation episodes. The researcher made a total of 47 observations to the ESL classroom which involved 145 hours of classroom time. The days of the week varied although observations were fairly evenly distributed over all the days of the week during the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. which accounted for the two ESL times in which these five subjects attended ESL. The researcher left the classroom each day at lunch time and would informally schedule the next day of observation with the teachers. In table 1, a summary of the observations is provided which includes typical ESL observations and curriculum, teacher interviews, and student interviews. It was noted on this table that writing occurred on a daily basis only in the last phases of the study.

Table 1. Observational Episodes

Episode 1 Grand Tour Classroom description	Episode 2 Room setup: Cultural Fair	Episode 3 Cultural Fair	Episode 4 Cultural Fair Bolivian Dances	Episode 5 Children's Play Rehearsal "The Three Bears"	Episode 6 Children's Play Rehearsal Video taping of <u>The Three Pigs</u>	Episode 7 Nursery rhymes, draving of characters Oral language
Episode 8 Nursery rhymes Reciting oral language	Episode 9 Jesús' birthday party-- popcorn making	Episode 10* Preparation for "Bilingual Buddy Day" Drawings with dictation	Episode 11 "Bilingual Buddy Day" Oral language play	Episode 12 "Bilingual Buddy Day" Oral language play	Episode 13 Communication movie Oral language	Episode 14* Communication captions Dictations Spanish/English
Episode 15* Letters to bilingual pen pals	Episode 16* Dictation Communication captions Spanish to English	Episode 17* Dictation Spanish to English	Episode 18 Card game nouns names Oral language	Episode 19* Computer story <u>1,000,000 Cats</u>	Episode 20 Puppet Show with nursery rhymes Oral language play	Episode 21 Formal interview with Carolina
Episode 22 Formal interview with Jesús	Episode 23* Story writing based on reading	Episode 24 Cooking "stone soup" recipe Oral language	Episode 25* Computer writing Workbook	Episode 26* Computer writing LIST, RUN Parents	Episode 27 Song practice for Intern'l. Dinner for Parents	Episode 28 Dance practice for Intern'l. Dinner for Parents and Students

Table 1-continued.

Episode 29 Set up daily mail Informal dialog interview with both teachers	Episode 30* Note writing from mailboxes	Episode 31* Note writing from mailboxes	Episode 32 Formal interview	Episode 33 Formal interview with José	Episode 34 Formal interview with Teresa	Episode 35 Formal interview with Hi with Yolanda
Episode 36 Formal interview with Mrs. Path	Episode 37* Letter writing for mailboxes	Episode 38* Letters to bilingual pen pals	Episode 39 Film on Foods from other cultures	Episode 40* Recipe writing (favorite foods)	Episode 41* Writing notes to teacher	Episode 42* Computer copies of letters to teacher
Episode 43* Making autograph books	Episode 44 Formal interview A	Episode 45 Formal interview with Marco	Episode 46 Formal interview with Mrs. Summer	Episode 47* Computer writing: Marco & José	Episode 48 Collection of writing samples	Episode 49 Final conference with teachers

Table represents 47 days of observation
* days writing occurred.
Source: Researcher's journal, February 1, 1984 - May 31, 1984.

Informal and formal interviewing. In this study, informal and formal interviews were held and recorded. Informal interviews were written into the field note record. Formal interviews were preplanned and scheduled with teachers and were audiotaped for future transcription. These formal interviews were conducted in the nearby library office with individual children and were planned in advance with the teachers. The researcher used as a guide Spradley's description which stated that an informal "interview occurs whenever you ask someone a question during the course of participant-observation" (1980, p. 123). The formal interview, however, resulted from a specific request by the researcher to hold the interview. Preplanned-questions were used to guide the interviews. These open-ended questions were used to elicit other questions or comments from the interviewee. For example, the following interview questions were asked of the five subjects in this study:

1. What do you do in bilingual class?
2. Tell me what it is you like about English class? What you don't like?
3. Tell me, do you know how people learn to write?
4. Do you ever write? Do you like to write?
5. When you do write, what things do you write about?
6. Why is it important for people to write?

During one of the formal interviews, one subject volunteered, "My father writes and my mother writes. My father writes about plants and poison plants." The researcher had asked

what do you write at home? The nature of these interviews was conversational and guided by the questions and by the responses of individual children. Some of the interviews lasted 45 minutes and with other less verbal children shorter interviews were recorded.

Unobtrusive measures. Unobtrusive data were collected in this study from the first visit to the school through the last day at the research site. Some of these data included results of students' ESL testing records, lesson plan outlines for the semester work, eighty-five writing samples of the ESL students observed, teacher-made artifacts related to writing, newsletters from the bilingual classes, and photographs of artifacts found in the ESL classroom. These data provided information which would complete descriptions of teachers and students and their writing processes. These methods were used in this study to document the daily classroom writing episodes, to describe what children thought about writing and what they did while writing. Through the analysis of the field note records and the other instruments employed, patterns emerged which created a "picture" of these bilingual children's composing behaviors and their perceptions of writing.

The study was conducted in one ESL classroom in a public school over a four-month period. The primary research questions provided the focus for the study; new questions, however, were formulated as data collection in the form of field notes, interviews, and audiotaped interviews were

analyzed. Two guiding questions directed the early stages of research: (a) What behaviors accompany the composing processes of young bilingual children? and (b) How do Spanish-speaking young children view writing?

The following questions emerged from the data as recurrent phenomena, widespread in the observational record. Answers to the following questions provide greater depth for understanding the central questions:

1. What do teachers do while children compose? What are the messages they send to children about writing?
2. What are the types of writing generated by students in an ESL classroom? By the teachers?
3. What is the role of oral language in the composing process? How are the English and Spanish languages used in the composing process?

Although this study can provide insights into the teaching and learning of writing, the composing behaviors and children's perceptions of writing may not be generalized to dissimilar populations.

Methodology

A descriptive methodology was selected in order to increase available data and generate research questions in an area where few studies exist. This research was conducted within the particular setting where bilingual children have opportunities to write. The researcher as a participant-observer was the main tool for research as she collected

descriptive data regarding the writings and interactions of young bilingual children. The guiding questions of the study dealt with the writing processes of children; therefore, a methodology was needed which emphasized process and not product. Finally, the question of perceptions of writing or children's views of writing required a methodology sensitive to gaining insights and understandings about the individuals in a group. It can be clearly seen why qualitative methods matched the problem addressed in this study. The features which typify qualitative research are outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982) as follows: (a) Research is conducted within the particular setting under study; (b) The researcher is the main research instrument; (c) Data are descriptive; (d) The focus is on ongoing processes rather than products; (e) Data are analyzed inductively; and (f) The researcher is concerned with understanding the perspectives of the people under study. The qualitative, naturalistic approach would provide the in-depth description lacking in the research literature on young bilingual writers. According to Wilcox qualitative research is defined as "a naturalistic, observational, descriptive contextual, open ended, and in-depth approach to doing research" (1982, p. 462).

The composing behaviors of young bilingual children are difficult to ascertain. Multiple observations of a specific behavior were made before a particular behavior was viewed as significant in terms of frequency of occurrence. The data clustered around a particular behavior that was seen as a

recurrent pattern. Many hours of observation may yield few behaviors related to composing in a classroom where the main focus, according to teacher report, is the development of oral-language skills in a second language. Special data gathering techniques and analytic methods were required to organize the data collected into understandable segments which would describe the composing process as well as capture the perspective or view of writing of these five subjects.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was an ongoing process which incorporated the written data sources discussed previously. The Spradley (1980) model was selected to guide the data collection and analysis procedures in this study. In this methodology, the researcher has guiding questions which lead into the research but are added to by field observations and other questions which emerge from the data. As data are collected, they are analyzed and more focused observations can then follow. The researcher's task in analyzing these data could be described as putting together a mosaic. The data must be searched systematically to order and make the data understandable. Bogdan and Biklen described this process as "working with (the) data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned and deciding what you will tell others" (1982, p. 145). This process of data analysis was ongoing and consisted of four

stages. Each phrase of the analysis related to the types of questions the researcher asked and the focus of the observations. This cycle of questioning, collecting, and analyzing was repeated throughout the study. The four phases of analysis were: (a) domain analysis, (b) taxonomic analysis, (c) componential analysis, (d) theme analysis.

The Spradley model utilized in this study gave the researcher a strategy which was systematic and organized. The data were analyzed to identify the composing behaviors and the writing events which related to the children's views of writing. Further analysis revealed other variables which had an impact on these composing behaviors and views of writing. The strategy of data collection and then analysis is fundamental to the research model chosen for this study.

Findings and Conclusions

The data were analyzed using the developmental research sequence described by Spradley (1980). The written field notes were typed onto protocols which represented one day of observation. From these protocols, data were organized into domains or categories which contained similar information such as: Kinds of Writing Behaviors of the Children, Kinds of Statements about Writing by Children; Kinds of Questions Children Asked about Writing; Types of Writing Protocols of Children; and Personal Communications of Children. Similar domains were organized for teacher behaviors as well. From these domains, taxonomies were constructed which indicated the

composing behaviors of individual children. This procedure was carried out for teachers as well. Twelve composing behaviors were identified from these taxonomies:

1. Reading Back--This practice was modeled by both teachers and used by two of the five children studied. For these children, reading back their writing helped them move onto the next step or finalized the statement they had made in writing.
2. Invented Spellings--Invented spellings occurred throughout the study and with all children. Invented spellings were demonstrated most frequently when children wrote personal messages apart from teacher intervention.
3. Copying--This practice was used by teachers and students alike and appeared across writing products. Teachers employed copying by asking children to copy from the board a word or phrase or copy from a paper a word they had written when the child requested it. Children were observed to use copying for word finding from environmental print or from a buddy's paper, or from a teacher's model.
4. Body Language--In this active social classroom, body language was observed during composing with all subjects. Some examples of body language were foot stamping, head scratching, pencil tapping, and hand rubbing. These behaviors occurred during all composing activities observed.

5. Prewriting--This behavior indicated some forethought or planning associated with writing and was used by three of the five subjects. Teachers tended to use planning in making suggestions for beginning a writing activity. Prewriting was observed only when two children wrote side by side or when one child wrote with the teacher. In other words, prewriting occurred as a miniconference about what was to be written.
6. Concealing Writing--Four of the five subjects employed this behavior. Concealing writing while it was in progress was viewed by the researcher as the child's attempt to work, uninterrupted, and create an independent message. On each occasion, the writing was shared when it was finished.
7. Writing Play--Writing play took many forms and was used by all of the subjects. Much of the writing play was simplistic and served a decorative purpose (i.e., hearts or flowers along with the message or punctuation marks with stars accompanying a short message). More complex examples of writing play were elaborate drawings with messages, many writings had a message or a secret number code in which each number had a corresponding letter.
8. Oral-Language Functioning--A category which included the speech messages generated by children with various functions;

    Confirmation questions--These questions appeared

in English and Spanish and with three of the five subjects and occurred with the most verbal youngsters, functioning to keep the composing process moving forward.

Talking while writing--All of the subjects talked while they wrote. The writing process was described as verbal and active, with Spanish and English being used interchangeably. Teachers supported and encouraged talk during ESL time and continued this practice during composing.

Asking questions--Questions were observed during every composing activity and by each subject across writing activities. Teacher practice was highly supportive of questions and many questions were modeled by teachers.

Statements about writing--Each subject was observed to make statements about his/her writing. Generally, they referred to content rather than form (i.e., "Look at this Mrs. Summer" or "Read this right now!").

Taking breaks--Two of the five children were break takers. They were observed to look at the ceiling, talk about a different subject, rest on their arm, or watch another activity during their composing activities.

All of the children in this study used the following composing behaviors while writing: inventing spelling,

copying, body language, writing play, writing talk, asking questions, and statements about their writing. Certain composing behaviors were employed by several children but not by others. For example, confirmation questions were only asked by Teresa, José, and Jesús, but not by Marco and Yolanda. This was attributed to the high verbalization level of the first group of children. Prewriting occurred only with children who worked with a buddy, like Yolanda and Teresa or with a teacher's direct assistance. Prewriting was, therefore, seen as being influenced by teacher practice rather than a spontaneous composing behavior.

The second component of this study which emerged from analysis of the data was the impact of teacher practice on the composing behaviors of these children. From the analysis of student composing behaviors and teacher composing behaviors, conclusions were drawn about the relationship teacher practice and children's composing behaviors. It was found that with specific children, teachers used certain composing behaviors consistently and these were seen as highly influential in the writing processes of these subjects. With the beginning writers, Teresa, Yolanda, and José, teachers used prewriting and copying when initiating a writing activity. Teachers appeared to view writing for these children as helping them get started and get words on the paper spelled correctly. As these subjects wrote more personal messages and invented spellings, teachers reduced copying practices and asked these children to spell the words on their own. Teachers stressed

getting started and giving words and phrases to all children observed in both groups. The message the teachers wanted to send to the children was that, planning what to write and writing it was important.

With Jesús and Marco, who were older and more advanced writers, teacher practice was different. Since both of these writers wrote by themselves, or apart from the group, the teacher served as a consultant to answer an occasional question about spelling or translation. Teacher practice appeared more involved with the content of the message since the mechanics of writing were not a problem for Jesús and Marco. Jesús was a slow starter who required teacher intervention to begin, but once on his way he wrote his own messages, stories, letters with only occasional questions to get confirmation or clarification to proceed. With Jesús and Marco, teacher instructional practice carried the message that these writers were in control of their writing. Their questions or comments were not rejected and this atmosphere may have enhanced their sense of competence as writers.

Findings Specific for Bilinguals

This research study was designed to describe what young bilingual children do while they write. A question that was posed along with that description was: Are the composing behaviors any different from those discovered in studies of monolingual writers? It appeared from this study that young bilingual children employed composing behaviors similar to

monolinguals in the following areas: invented spelling, copying, body language, prewriting, writing play, talking while writing, asking questions while writing, taking breaks, and making statements about their writing. These behaviors had been observed in previous writing research (Childers, 1981; Clay, 1975; Graves, 1982; Green, 1984; Read, 1971).

Among these composing behaviors shared by monolingual and bilingual children, several functions of these behaviors were uniquely employed by the children of this study. When children talked while they wrote, they were making the transition to writing by using Spanish phrases to get started writing. This phenomenon also occurred with two other oral language composing behaviors: asking questions and statements about writing. In the initial stages of the research, translation questions were the most frequent as can be seen in this sequence:

Mrs. Summer: (taking dictation) I like to write to my grandmother and to my aunt.

José: Sí, me gusta escribir a mi abuela ya mi tía. [Yes, I like to write to my grandmother and my aunt.]

Mrs. Summer: What else would you like to write?

José: Me gusta hablar por teléfono con mis amigos.

Mrs. Summer: Try it in English. I like to talk to my friends on the telephone.

José: I like to talk to my friends on the telephone.

These composing behaviors were characterized by translation

speech messages which allowed children to make the transition from talk to writing and/or aid the young bilingual child as a language reinforcer to the written message in progress.

In this study, three composing behaviors were specific for these young bilingual children: reading back, confirmation questions, and concealing writing. With the emergence of these behaviors more questions must be researched by further investigations with bilinguals.

A first question for new research is whether or not these behaviors recur in other studies of bilingual young children? A second general question is whether these specific behaviors may be linked to strictly Spanish speakers or are these behaviors related to a broader cultural set of values? (i.e., field dependent behavior).

The nature of qualitative research is such that with data analysis new variables surface which may have an impact on the questions of interest. In this study, young bilingual children's composing behaviors are found to be related to several variables, which included teacher practices, writing developmental levels, personality factors, oral language ability in English and Spanish and the writing context. Further research is necessary in order to define more completely the composing processes and views of writing that bilingual children hold.

The writers in this study presented two views of writing which appeared to be functions of age, developmental writing levels, and their interactions within this context. The

younger writers viewed writing in school as a process that usually involves a teacher and task which involves getting the individual words on the page. For example, in this episode the child insisted on help:

José: What does this say? I need help!

Mrs. Summer: It says: "I'm so glad you had a nice weekend. What will you do after school today?"

José: Can you write you back? I don't know how to in English!

Mrs. Summer: Then how about in Spanish.

José: I don't know how in Spanish to write.

Mrs. Summer: Then maybe you'll think of another way to answer my note.

José: OK? Maybe you help me?

Mrs. Summer: Do you want to write, me?

José: Yeah! (loud voice)

Mrs. Summer: Here, I'll help you (and takes his note from dictation).

Only in the final weeks of the study did these three subjects begin some independent writing and appear to view writing in school as personal communication which matched their home-oriented view of writing as communication. In this study, the teachers' practices supported this view of writing for these three young writers. For the older subjects, who had reportedly written already in their native languages, a different view of writing emerged. These writers were more concerned with the content of the message and exercised

greater control over the mechanisms of writing as previously discussed. Their incoming views of writing persisted throughout the study; however, the frequency of writing and the personal meanings expressed indicated a shift in perceptions about writing. Writing at school appeared to be viewed as meaningful communication. These composite profiles or general types of writers have been described in studies of young monolingual writers by Genishi and Dyson (1982) and Graves (1975, 1981, 1983). The factors which appeared in their studies were also discussed in the findings of this study: peer interaction, teacher practice, and developmental levels of the writer.

A final conclusion of this study is the pattern noted in the frequency of writing over the length of the study. From analysis of the observations, a clear pattern emerged, which was linked to the addition of the mailboxes and daily messages exchange between subjects and teachers. Children wrote more frequently and the length of their messages increased across subjects in the final phases of this study. Teacher practice and meaning-related instructional practice may be cited as having great influence on the writing behavior of these subjects. Dyson (1983) and Lamme and Childers (1981) have similar conclusions, that when children write personal messages or engage in activities in which they are personally and directly involved, their written communication skills are enhanced.

To summarize, the present study reveals the following

findings about children's composing behaviors and their views of writing:

1. For this sample, bilingual young children employed the same composing behaviors as younger monolingual writers.
2. These composing behaviors were not shared by all of the subjects, but all of the children used most of the composing behaviors cited.
3. In this study, three composing behaviors appeared to be specific for bilingual children: reading back, confirmation questions, and concealing writing.
4. Teacher practice, in conjunction with student variables, appeared to impact children's composing behaviors as well as the views these children held about writing.
5. Children in this study held views of writing which may be, in part, explained by age, teacher practices, developmental writing levels, and the interactional setting where the writing occurred.
6. When children were encouraged to write personal messages during a three-week mailbox dialog intervention, the children in this study appeared to alter their views of writing.
7. For this sample, when children wrote personal messages, their frequency of writing and length of message increased.
8. This study provided detailed descriptions of the

composing behaviors and examples of written products, illustrative of the composing process.

9. New variables and questions for further study were generated for future research into the composing process.

Conclusion

This study's purpose was to provide a description and analysis that can improve the understanding of what actual learners do while they write in ESL classrooms. The importance of the context and of the interactions between teachers and students have been documented in this study which, although small in scope, can offer much to teachers, supervisors, and teacher educators.

The detailed descriptions of bilingual children and their struggles to communicate will be recognized by many classroom teachers--language specialists as well as regular classroom teachers. In the context of this study, these learners were seen to be highly influenced by the practices of their teachers and the input of their peers. Teachers may recognize these elements of the interactive process as making great impact on the teaching and learning of writing. The questions investigated in this study and the conclusions drawn emphasize the composing practices, as well as the views or writing which emerged for the children in this study. Looking closely at the composing behaviors of these children and those of the teachers of this study may help practitioners clarify their

perspectives and adjust their views of writing to include instructional practices which are compatible with the composing strategies of their students.

The importance of the classroom environment and teacher practices had impact on monolinguals and bilinguals for oral language and writing (Edelsky, 1983; Ferreior & Teberosky, 1982; Hudelson, 1983). The present study complements these findings and may create an awareness for teachers and teacher supervisors in creating supportive and accepting language-rich environments for the development of literacy.

The teachers in this study and the classroom context centered around encouraging verbal and written expression from children based on children's agendas and important life events. The teacher practices and curriculum focused on getting meaning from children, learning from children, and acceptance of the individual composing levels and styles.

Teachers serve as models for both oral and written language in their classrooms. The language of choice that teachers use with a young bilingual may be crucial to the child's feelings of acceptance in terms of both oral language functioning and written language construction (Hamayan & Tucker, 1980; Hoffman & McCully, 1984; Legaretta, 1977; Thonis, 1977). Although teacher practices in this classroom accepted all attempts to communicate by children, the language of choice was principally English and Spanish was used mainly when a child was experiencing difficulty. It is the hypothesis of the researcher that if Mrs. Summer and Mrs. Path

had had evidence that native language usage might facilitate language learning for this population, their practices might have been adapted to include greater usage of L_1 over various contexts of the classroom environment.

Children in this study were described as active and verbal constructors of a new oral language and evidencing the beginning stages of written language. The transition to literacy is aided by language--a language-rich context and practices which encourage child-centered meaningful communication (Calkins, 1983; Chomsky, 1971; Graves, 1981; Harste et al., 1981). The teacher practices in this study promoted a language-rich environment, with many opportunities toward the close of the study for children to construct their own personal messages. The passive instructional environment of writing skills and children seated, quietly writing is not described by the findings of this study. A rationale for the teachers and supervisors of teachers for literacy development which is active, questioning, and verbally interactive might be drawn from these findings.

The conclusions of this study are tied to oral-language development, teacher modeling, language-rich environments, and a rationale for a verbally interactive environment. A further insight for teachers and their supervisors may be the realization that individual children carry views of literacy just as adults do. These views of literacy are highly affected by the components of a classroom environment, teacher beliefs and practices, and peer interactive personalities,

which impinge on the learner. An analytical consideration of young bilingual children's views of writing may indeed facilitate teachers in fostering these children's writing development.

Summary

The unique contribution of this study to composing research is that both learner and context are described in their natural classroom setting during active composing activities.

It has been observed that both children and teachers contributed to the composing behaviors and views of writing discovered. Other variables which need further study have emerged from this research. Further, the fluency and frequency of writing increased, as children move from teacher-directed activities to the daily dialog of meaningful personal messages between teachers and students.

The study raises many more questions than it resolves. Future research on the composing behaviors and views of writing for young bilinguals can bring about understanding for development of teaching and learning environments where literacy will flourish.

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